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DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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WHEN THE "MOUNTIES" DID NOT "GET THEIR MAN"

A REAL DIME NOVEL STORY

J. H. Ambruster

1458 Pensacola Ave., Chicago, Ill.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police who, among other duties, patrol the international border between the United States and Canada, are renowned for their efficiency, and have frequently been credited with "always getting their man." As in other cases, usually there are exceptions to any general rule, and there was one time at least, when they did not "get their man." The story follows, but for obvious reasons real names and actual locations are not given:

Andrew McNulty, a resident of eastern Canada, enlisted in the service of the mounted police or "Mounties," and for some time served in various sections of the country; finally he was transferred to service along the border in western Canada. As with many another young man, there was a girl in the case, the "girl he left behind him." The great distance between the home of this lassie and his present location soon grew irksome, and Andy longed to return to his lady love. He soon found, however, that separation from his government connection was not an easy matter, and after weeks of brooding over his predicament, he decided to take the matter into his own hands.

Therefore, one night after return to headquarter's from his day's riding, when all had retired, Andy quietly stole out into the corral, clandestinely took one of the freshest horses and rode out into the night, across the

border, into the "land of the free."

He followed the course of a winding stream which ran from north to south in a zig-zag manner, reasoning that this would be a sure guide to habitation of some sort in this wild country where ranch houses or lone settler's shacks are miles apart, and that this was the only logical way to avoid getting lost. On the sides of the river, perhaps half a mile back from either bank, there were abrupt rises to the plateaux above, where signs of habitation were even farther apart than in the valley. Frequently on these plateaux the radius of vision is much like that on the high seas; a circle of view of a mile or so in diameter surrounds the individual, making it difficult without compass, (which is usually carried), to follow any specified direction. A wise horse if not carefully watched, will gradually nose around until after an hour or two the unsuspecting rider will find himself at the edge of the valley brink near his starting point. Of course, there are no trees or other landmarks to guide one in these travels—the sun and a compass being the only reliable aids. Another reason for keeping close to the river was there would be ample water supply for man and beast. So Andy chose the river route.

Daybreak found him, some eight or ten miles from the border, where he spied a sod shack, the home of a lonely settler who was bestirring himself with his breakfast duties. According to the friendly custom of the plains, without apology or other formality, Andy announced his arrival and readiness for breakfast and rest. The self-imposed invitation was heartily ac-

cepted; in fact, according to another plains' custom, the newly-found sod house inhabitant would have considered it an insult if a weary traveler had gone by without stopping for such hospitality as his humble household afforded. At once these two men were as old-time friends or brothers, and Andy made no secret of the reason for his untimely arrival or ultimate destination, or the reason therefor.

After breakfast, in order to dispel as much as possible, any chance accusation of having stolen Canadian Government property, or perhaps primarily to be less encumbered in his attempted escape, he made this proposition to his friendly host: that he would leave with him the horse, saddle and other equipment, including coat and heavy spurred boots (in exchange for a lighter pair of shoes), also revolver and holster, on condition that in case his pursuers happened along that all of this property would be turned over to them, and the pursuers implored to return to their headquarters with the satisfaction of having accomplished at least the better part of their errand. This Andy confidently thought they would not hesitate doing for the sake of former comradeship and their sympathy with his own plan, the reason for which was well understood by them. If, however, no one appeared within a reasonable time, the agreement was that then the horse and other belongings would become the property of the good samaritan who had furnished this needed hospitality. A further thought was that if this benevolent move did not prompt the pursuers to discontinue the chase of the fugitive, that there would be a decided advantage in fleeing afoot, in that the tracing of his flight by means of horse hoof tracks would be eliminated. Accordingly, he proceeded on foot, hoping by some streak of luck to outdistance his pursuers and make good his escape—to where, he knew not.

This river, while not of extreme depth is hemmed in by soft banks, with treacherous mirey bottom, and can be crossed by horse and rider only at occasional gravelly fords which occur several miles apart. Andy left the Canadian camp on the right hand side of the stream, and on reaching the first ford, some miles out of

camp, he crossed over to the other side, on which side farther down the stream, was located the breakfast haven. Some hours after his departure from this stopping place a couple of "mounties" arrived who had trailed him thus far by means of hoof prints. Here they too, were ready for rest, and eagerly listened to the settler's story of Andy's visit and the property left in his charge. Doubtless the tale was lengthened somewhat in order to give Andy more time for his hurried travel. The "mounties," pleased with Andy's considerate act, at the same time felt it their duty to try to "get their man," rather than to return with a report of incomplete success. Telling our sod-hut friend that they would be back for the horse and equipment, they continued down the river bank, now several hours in Andy's rear. Poor Andy, making headway as fast as human strength would permit without unnecessary exertion, not knowing when he would strike the next habitation, also kept a watchful eye to the rear, for along these plains' rivers it is possible to discern such objects as fast-moving horses and riders by means of clouds of dust for a considerable distance. Finally such a cloud appeared on the northern horizon, and what was Andy to do? However, his thoughtful and inventive mind had been at work, and into the river he plunged and swam to the opposite shore, knowing full well that the horsemen could not follow him at this soft and mirey point. The horsemen approached, and calling on him to halt or swim back, he crouched beneath some slight shrubbery or small trees which lined the bank here and there, and awaited consequences. Not wanting to inflict bodily harm by use of weapons on their erstwhile companion, especially as he had really committed no serious crime other than deserting, (which in military circles of course is a serious matter), the mounties decided that there was nothing to do but retrace their steps to the ford and return on the other side, as soon as they departed Andy continued on the other side. As soon as they departed Andy continued on the right hand bank, being refreshed by his impromptu bath and temporary rest. After an hour or so another cloud of dust appeared to the rear of

Andy. He repeated his former tactics of swimming the river to the other side. The mounties again were chagrined at losing their quarry; this time, however, instead of returning to the ford above, they continued on the right bank in the hope of finding another crossing place not far below. Andy continued on the left hand side, but naturally at a slower pace than his pursuers. After some time he observed a cloud of dust approaching from the south on his side of the river. Swimming to the other side, he again evaded them. When they approached they called cheerily, "You win, Andy; good bye," left him to his fate, rode away to the sod hut and home. They did NOT get their man.

About twenty-five miles from the Canadian border, on one of the higher banks of the river was situated a prosperous ranch settlement, consisting of a substantially built log home of the manager of a large cattle company, an equally well built and commodious "mess hall," numerous bunk houses, corrals, etc., with a gravelly cattle ford and pedestrians foot bridge at the entrance. While enjoying their after dinner smoke and rest, the cowboy inhabitants of this attractive spot were surprised to see emerging from the river bank below a hatless, coatless, bedrenched and bedraggled specimen of humanity, such as even these men accustomed as they were to rough and ready living, had never before seen. The desolate figure approached, was given a hearty welcome, furnished food, dry clothing, and then allowed to "spin his yarn" in full. This Andy did to the group of open-mouthed, attentive listeners, and it may be imagined that no small part of his thrilling adventure was omitted. One and all heartily approved of Andy's course and he was acclaimed the hero of the day.

The manager gave him a job and all went well for a while, when Andy again began to brood over the girl in the east and wanted to get to the nearest railroad station, (some sixty miles away) in order to try to meet her somewhere in the "States." It was suggested that he bring her to this same locality, take up a claim and establish a home on the plains for Mary, the only name by which she was generally known. All men and

women on the prairies are known only by their first names. It was the custom of ranch employes to take up claims in their own right, even if they had no immediate use for them. Such claims usually were taken along the river bottom rich with luxuriant wild hay grass, and the claimant after making some initial improvement as required by law, (breaking sod, building a rude shack or digging a well), if he had no stock of his own and no use for the grass, allowed the company to harvest it. These claims might be far distant from headquarters, the one which Andy preempted being thirty miles from base. He broke the virgin sod, started building his hut but before finishing it went east for Mary. He planned to meet her at Detroit. Now Detroit was some 1500 miles from the place where he had deserted, but knowing all too well the efficiency and vigilance of Canadian government and military officials, he would not take the chance of going on to Mary's home, or even to cross into Canada at so far distant a point as Detroit. Suffice it to say that he met Mary, was duly married, and one day arrived on the once-a-week stage and dropped off in the vicinity of his future home.

A mile from Andy's claim was another sod building, a sort of branch of the main ranch thirty miles above on the same river, which shack housed a couple of "punchers" who had charge of a herd in that section. The next house nearest to Andy's was some ten miles away, and there was located another woman, one of probably two or three in this thirty mile stretch. So Andy and his bride stopped off at Dave and Joe's shack and asked whether they could be accommodated until Andy had time to complete his own domicile. This was readily granted, and as the shack had a double-decked berth, (hard boards and no springs or mattress), arranged as in a Pullman car, some sort of a curtain was fashioned and the lower berth assigned to the newly arrived bride and groom.

Incidentally, these were the days when men wore flowing mustaches, often with waxed ends. Well, Dave, in anticipation of honored guests, had taken unusual pains to shave, wax his mustache and otherwise "fix up,"

The shack was infested with small field mice, who not only were unwelcome guests at mealtime, coming thru the thick sod and onto the table, but also paid nightly visits. Believe it or not, when Dave arose next morning he found that one side of his mustache had been neatly chewed off.

To continue with Andy and Mary: in due course the sod shack was finished, rough furniture constructed, and the permanent home of Andy and Mary established. As already stated, she had the honor of being the only woman within ten miles in one direction, maybe twenty in another, and unlimited spaces on other sides. Andy returned to the employ of the cattle company, it being haying time when thousands of tons of hay were harvested up and down the river, and piled into long rectangular stacks for winter use. He procured two cows as his start as a ranchman, and as he had not yet acquired a pony, Mary's cows would be taken out on the range daily and returned at night by one of her neighboring puncher friends, for which service he would be handed a half gallon pan of milk, (without cup or glass), to drink as much as he liked. Strange to say, with herds of thousands of cattle, there usually is no milk and no fresh meat. Milch cows require too much care, and fresh beef is a luxury which has greater value on the eastern market.

At last accounts Andy and Mary were prospering very nicely, and no further harm came to Andy, later a good American citizen who had the distinction of being the one man whom the mounties did not get. As the novelist would say, "they lived happily ever afterwards."

NOVELNUT NONSENSE

DROPPING IN on Bro. French, we found him in his studio making furious practice passes in the air with a large razor. On the mantel we observed a photograph of Bro. Bragin. Purely a coincidence, of course.

A midnight noise in his hen-yard drew a charge of rock-salt from Bro. Cummings' musket. Daylight revealed a pick-axe, a hole in the ground and a flour-sack. It developed that Bro. Ed. Smeltzer was lying on his face at ROUND UP HOSPITAL, deliriously

mumbling about having located Captain Kidd's treasure from directions given in a Beadle Library. Ed, who traces his blood back to the Mayflower, this time had it traced back about four miles.

WHEN IN FRISCO put up at BERT'S POPULAR FLOP. Rates: Gentlemen, 10c, Bums 5c. Running water next door. Comfort station up the alley, 5c, kids free. A lean-to is under construction for dopes and punks. Write Bro. Couch for reservations. (Advt.)

WHEN THE weather, rheumatism, and the devil, to say nothing of old-age, get into a fellow, as they decidedly had on the occasion of our last interview with Persimmon Bill, which was most inopportune, as Bill had got out his little can of private cuss-words and had just come to the surface to breathe, we found that there was no truth to the scandalous report that Bill was in clink for beating up his poor old grandmother, but that it was meant for Bro. Bob Burns, and that Bob had not pummeled Grandma, but that it was Grandma who sent Bob into a tail-spin with a baseball bat. Grandma's cigarets had disappeared.

ON RETURNING to business after lunch, Bro. Taylor found that his peanut-roaster had blown up, and no insurance on it. But a good man simply cannot be kept down, and Charlie's new push-wagon will be bigger and better and have a three-tone steam whistle. This truly represents enterprise AND push, and also a care-free future.

WE UNDERSTAND that our Bro. Austin has returned from travels that covered the States from California to Florida. Truly, Uncle Charlie can break out in more places than the measles or the seven-year itch.

TO ARMS! TO ARMS! It is singular, but President Cummings' clarification appeal for war-volunteers disclosed that 97% of our members were seriously ill. The call however, was answered by Bro. Moran, armed with his scatter-gun, and Bro. Hurd, who showed up with a drum that his forebear had whacked at Bunker Hill. Alas! All unforeseen arose the small question of leadership. Onlookers relate that Brothers Hurd and Moran tied in a knot apparently, rose to the ceiling and descended again on the

priceless drum, which flattened out. We submit that these few squirts of rich, red blood might better have been shed for the Greeks, but also feel that no country is lost, which has such scrappers for defenders.

VISITING WITH his cousin, Bro. Joe Krajic, is the noted bomb-thrower, Bohuslav Poppikoff, who pasted a Commissar with a bomb and got out of Russia on snowshoes. Joe writes that he can't shake Bohuslav.

AS THE very epitome of grace at our recent Gandhi Guards parade, Bro. Miller was the cat's whiskers and easily drew down the double prize of a whisk-broom and a butterdish. San Antonio papers please copy.

To assuage the curiosity of some of our old dears who have written, well, our wig conceals a knotted brow just as an oyster conceals a pale pearl and ever since, as a youth, we watched Grandpa tank-up on white-mule, and when well jingled indulge that fine old American custom of wife-beating, our education has progressed, and this bottle-nosed little puffin with a button for a head has likewise yearned to achieve distinction, and behold in him a colyum editor, employed by Bro. Cummings at enormous cost. That's the inside story. Allah is great! Let us now gargle a hooter or two from the KLUB KEG. We welcome the hissing. It's the foam.

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NEWSY NEWS

By Ye Editor

Frank Tousey reprinted No. 1 of Wild West Weekly in Happy Days, in 1909. Bill Burns says he was 18 years old then and used to take Happy Days every week. Cover page of Happy Days, shows a fine large picture of Young Wild West and smaller pictures of Aretta, Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and Hop Wah. Bill says the author of Old King Brady, Thomas Doughty, has a lot of stories in Happy Days.

"Thrillers," of the Victorian Age, comprising "Penny Dreadfuls," loved by school boys and similar literature for their elders. This is a catalogue, No. 689-1940, of old English "Penny Dreadfuls," etc., for sale by "Maggs Bros., Ltd., 50 Berkeley Square, London, W. I. England. They are selling these penny bloods now such as Young Men of Great Britain, Handsome Harry, Ching Chang, Young Englishman's Journal, Sweeney Todd, Jack Harkaway, Boys Comic Journal, Boys of the Empire, Boys Comic Novelette, Hogarth House Novels, Dark Deeds of Old London, and many others.

Irving Shulman, 912 Linden Blvd.,

Brooklyn, N. Y. wishes the answers to the following questions. "In my study of the dime novel I am attempting the following treatment:

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7. A definitive bibliography of dime novels, articles, pamphlets, and other material written in reference to the dime novel.

What an outline! I know I will need plenty of help on this thing, and I am anxious to credit all acknowledgements which will be due."

Edward Le Blanc and his father were up to see ye editor July 6th. Also Eli A. Messier. We had quite a gathering. Hiram Fuller was up June 20th. He is interested in stamps and gift books. All swell fellows, too.

Our fellow member Carl Jones who recently underwent a second major operation at Garfield Park Hospital, Chicago, was removed to his home after a months stay at that institution and good progress has been reported. His family wishes to extend their thanks for the warm sympathy exhibited during this period as expressed in the many letters received from our members.

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An illustrated, priced guide to Americana, American First Editions and books of interest to American Collectors, comprising over 6000 entries.

We have some new members with us. Mrs. Sadie Bragin, of Brooklyn, N. Y. has the largest dime novel collection in existence, of feminine interest. She possesses all the stories written for Beadle and other dime novel publishers by women. Also all stories in all dime novel libraries in which girls appear as the heroines—her collection covers all the famous females of the dime novels from Calamity Jane to Frank Merriwell's sweetheart Elsie. A fine collection. Welcome to the Happy Hours Brotherhood. Sadie.

Albert D. Stone, 88 Norfolk Ave., Swampscott, Mass., says he has a very large collection of dime and nickel novels. Welcome to our ranks, pard.

We have a newcomer with us, and here it is. "The Story Paper Collector," printed and issued occasionally by Wm. H. Gander, P. O. Box 60, Transcona, Manitoba, Canada. Vol. 1. No. 1, January-March, 1941. 8 pages, 2 columns to the page, yellow paper, size 5 x 6 1/4 inches. Title, "The Boy's Friend." A Famous British Boy's Journal—1895 to 1927, by W. H. Gander, himself. All those who are interested in this little paper, had better write direct to Bro. Gander. He will welcome all letters. A worthy little paper, and we must see that he brings out more issues of the Story Paper Collector. Long may it stand.

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